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Department of Public Works  
Departament van Openbare Werke  
Lefapha La Ditiro Tsa Setshaba

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## OFFICE OF THE MEC

### PRESS RELEASE

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### **PUBLIC WORKS SUPPORTS EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS**

Lighting the candle of hope, HIV and Aids activists from the Christian Action Group told Public Works employees that disclosure brings relieve and that being HIV positive doesn't make colleagues in the workplace less human. This was said at the Department of Public Works' Workplace Candlelight Memorial Service held at the department's Provincial Head Office in Mmabatho on Friday.

Speaking at the service, North West Public Works Head of Department, Mr Obakeng Mongale committed his department to create a working environment that cares and support employees who are infected and affected with HIV and Aids, especially those who are ill.

The event which included employees from all regions and Head Office was organised to remember people lost to HIV and Aids, raise awareness about Departmental programmes to support employees living with HIV and Aids.

Mongale said that government has shown political will and commitment to fight the epidemic by putting in place laws that protect the right of those living with HIV and Aids. These laws include the constitution and the Bill of Rights, the Labour Relations Act, the Employment Equity Act, the occupational Health and Safety Act and the Promotion of Equality of Discrimination Act.



Discouraging stigmatisation of employees living with HIV and Aids and encouraging employees to be part of the fight against HIV and Aids, he said, "As a nation we can choose to collapse into squabbles or to unite against the epidemic. Let us not judge each other, but support each other. All of us have a role to arrest the spread of the disease. We need to have ourselves tested so that if we are negative, we act to stay that way, and so that if positive, we begin to live positively and choose healthy lifestyles."

Mongale said that the department is part of an Inter Departmental Committee on HIV and Aids responsible for providing care, support and counselling, and coordinating community outreach programme.

The department's Employee Assistance Programme also has a programme that ensures that employees are educated about HIV and Aids. The department has also appointed Regional HIV and Aids Coordinators to assist employees with referrals for medication, issuing them with vitamin supplements, coordination of voluntary counseling and testing in the workplace, coordination of support groups, ensuring safety of employees with the assistance of the Departmental Occupational health and Safety committee.

"All of us should share the responsibility of ensuring that we do not forget those who lost their lives to Aids, and we should spread love, tolerance and understanding today and every other day." concluded Mongale.

The commemoration was a build up event towards the International Candlelight Day Memorial that is commemorated annually on the 21 May. In South Africa, the second week of May is nationally declared Candlelight Memorial Week and culminates into National Candlelight Memorial on the 21 May.

**ISSUED BY THE NORTH WEST DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

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